

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Gum Creek
other names/site number Department of Historic Resources File # 032-0046

2. Location

street & number 1317 Stage Junction Road ☒ not for publication
city or town Columbia ☒ vicinity
state Virginia code VA county Fluvanna code 065 Zip 23038

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is: ☐ other (explain): _____
☐ entered in the National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the
National Register
☐ See continuation sheet. Signature of Keeper
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceGum Creek
Fluvanna County, VA

☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="text"/> 1	<input type="text"/> 0 buildings
<input type="text"/> 0	<input type="text"/> 0 sites
<input type="text"/> 2	<input type="text"/> 0 structures
<input type="text"/> 1	<input type="text"/> 0 objects
<input type="text"/> 4	<input type="text"/> 0 Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A**6. Function or Use****Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <input type="text"/> Domestic	Sub: <input type="text"/> Single Dwelling
<input type="text"/> Secondary Structure	<input type="text"/> Smokehouse
<input type="text"/> Secondary Structure	<input type="text"/> Buggy Shed
<input type="text"/> Object	<input type="text"/> Enclosed spring

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <input type="text"/> Domestic	Sub: <input type="text"/> Single Dwelling
<input type="text"/> Secondary Structure	<input type="text"/> Storage
<input type="text"/> Secondary Structure	<input type="text"/> Storage
<input type="text"/> Object	<input type="text"/> Enclosed spring

7. Description**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

Early Republic
 Other: I-house

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

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foundation Stone
 roof Metal
 walls Weatherboard
 other Stone & Brick – chimneys

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance 1797 - 1942

Significant Dates 1797
ca. 1840

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder James D. Ross and David Ross

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☒ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # 164: WPA, Susie V. Shepherd, 12/30/1937
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☒ Local government (Fluvanna County)
☒ University (Princeton)
☒ Other

Name of repository: Eliza Maria Bancroft Ross Barrett records; David Ross letter book

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 33.1 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing
1 17 749810 4184390	2 17 749760 4184170
3 17 749480 4184290	4 17 749500 4184400
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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National Park Service

Gum Creek
Fluvanna County, VA

11. Form Prepared Byname/title: Grace Lindsay NoltingOrganization: _____ date December 1, 2002street & number: 1317 Stage Junction Road telephone 434-842-3049city or town Columbia state VA zip code 23038**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Grace Lindsay Noltingstreet & number 1317 Stage Junction Road telephone 434-842-3049city or town Columbia state VA zip code 23038

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**Gum Creek
Fluvanna County, VA**

Summary Description:

The Gum Creek house in Fluvanna County, Virginia, sits on a hill in an isolated clearing, facing east against a backdrop of mixed woods. Gum Creek is a single-pile, gable-roofed, central-passage-plan house clad in weatherboard. It was constructed ca. 1797 for James Dunlop Ross, son of David Ross, an early property owner in the County. The creek for which the place was named is west of the house and flows into the Rivanna River a half mile away. The house has been little altered and possesses a high degree of integrity. Most of its interior woodwork has never been painted.

Detailed Analysis

Gum Creek is a modest story-and-a-half frame house, three bays wide over a stone foundation and partial basement. It was probably built ca. 1797 for James Dunlop Ross following his marriage in 1795. The original beaded siding has been replaced twice, first with plain pine siding. That siding deteriorated and was replaced in 1974 with beaded redwood siding. All openings have architrave trim. Each end elevation has a chimney with a stone base and brick shaft. Small casement windows flank the shafts in each gable. Two one-story shed additions were added after 1839. The west addition, comprised of an open porch and an enclosed, unheated mudroom, extends from the center door on the west elevation to the north corner of the house. The other addition, on the north elevation behind the chimney, provides a 6' x 7' extension for the ground-floor room.

Each of the rooms flanking the central hall measures 15'4" by 19'2". The rooms and the hall have original, wide, pine boards between chair rail and base. Walls above the wainscoting are plastered. Mantels in both rooms are pine. The one in the south room has symmetrically molded pilasters. The one in the north room is surrounded by a wide three-part architrave. The woodwork is mortised and pegged and has never been painted. The doors have six panels and there are pine floors throughout. The ceiling height is about 9'2".

The stair begins at the east entrance with four winders and then ascends in a single long flight to the second floor. On the open side there is a handrail and simple balusters, rectangular in section. The inner wall of the stair and the center hall upstairs are paneled with wide, beaded, horizontal boards. The knee walls, however, are plastered and finished with a 5" baseboard.

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Original batten doors open into bedrooms on either side of the hall. The ceiling height is 6'4" at the

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center of the upstairs rooms; on either side the plaster follows the slope of the roof to knee walls.

The south bedroom was originally slightly larger than the other. A small plank door to either side gives access to storage space in the eaves, a convenience lacking in the north bedroom. At an unknown date, a five-foot portion was partitioned off the hall side of the south bedroom. In 1975 the present owner placed a bathroom in this narrow, ready-made space.

A steep, winding stair connects the ground floor to the old kitchen in the north end of the basement. This contains the largest fireplace in the house. The south end of the basement was never completely excavated, although windows were built in the stone foundation for light and ventilation. The remains of wide, pegged window frames with horizontal bars enabled a carpenter in the 1970s to replicate the original basement windows, two facing east and one west. A door in the old kitchen wall once provided access to the yard. This was blocked when a wing was added in the 19th century.

Minor modifications have been made at Gum Creek. Exterior doors were replaced with double doors of a type favored locally in the 1830s, perhaps at the time of the second marriage of Anna Maria Ross in 1825 or possibly at the time new owners acquired the house in 1839. The original beaded siding, of which only one piece remains, was replaced with plain pine siding. Very deteriorated, this in turn was replaced in 1974 with beaded siding. At the same time, the brick chimney shafts were repointed; plumbing and electricity were added, and kitchen appliances were installed in the 1840s shed wing. A forced-air heating and cooling system was installed in 1996. An early-twentieth-century tin roof was replaced with the present metal roof in 1997.

The property contains three contributing resources. A **smokehouse** with a square footprint approximately 10' x 10' is located twenty feet northwest of the house. It has patched vertical siding, a steeply pitched tin roof, a gable end door and pegged construction. A **buggy shed**, located fifteen paces southwest of the smokehouse on the slope of the hill, has a footprint of about 13' x 13', a tin roof, vertical pine weatherboard and a plank partition dividing the interior into two spaces. The south section has a wide opening to accommodate an unhitched buggy. The north half has a door to secure the space, and in 1973 it still contained a manger. The floor in both sections is dirt.

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The original **stone-encased spring** located downhill to the south remains a reliable source of water. The spring "gum," or enclosure, of un-mortared stone, is built into the slope of a ridge marking the edge of Gum Creek's flood plain. It appears that a small cave was enlarged and shored up in this

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**Gum Creek
Fluvanna County, VA**

way to provide access to the water within.

8. Statement of Significance

Gum Creek in Fluvanna County, Virginia, is a little-altered and well preserved example of a characteristic type of Virginia Piedmont house of the late eighteenth century. It is a frame, center-passage-plan, two-over-two dwelling with stone foundation, basement kitchen and stone and brick end chimneys. The house was built about 1797 by the Ross family, early landholders in Fluvanna County, and is representative of the modest dwellings built by middle-class farmers and planters in the Virginia Piedmont in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Surveys undertaken by the State Historic Preservation Office in the 1970s and the local planning district commission using state funding in 1992-1993 and recent surveys in other Virginia Piedmont counties indicate that, of the several surviving examples of this type of early dwelling in the area, Gum Creek has seen the fewest alterations among those that remain structurally sound.

Criteria Statement

Gum Creek is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C for architecture with significance at the local level. It is one of the few, little-altered examples remaining in Fluvanna County of the two-over-two, story-and-a-half, center-passage-plan, I-house once common in the Virginia Piedmont.

Historical Background

Gum Creek's first head of household, James D. Ross, worked for his father, David Ross, whose entrepreneurial energy and vast holdings made him a powerful figure in late eighteenth-century Virginia. David Ross (1739 – 1817) conveyed the 1500- acre tract on which Gum Creek would be built to his second son, James Dunlop Ross (1774 – 1800) soon after James's marriage in October 1795 to Eliza Maria Bancroft of Wilmington, Delaware. David Ross appears to have been involved in the construction of his son's house. A bill for masonry work, most likely at Gum Creek, is among the papers in the Fluvanna County Court House. The bill was addressed to James Ross, but was paid

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by David Ross who wrote on the back of the bill that his son thought the price too high.

David Ross's acquisition of the Gum Creek tract was part of a flurry of land speculation occasioned when Loyalist landowners returned to Great Britain, leaving unprotected properties in the former

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Gum Creek
Fluvanna County, VA

colonies. Virginia's Act to Escheat encouraged the sale of such properties to refill the state's post-war treasury. In the late 1780s David Ross owned 100,000 acres of land in Virginia, but by the 1790s his credit was eroded.

James D. Ross graduated in the class of 1792 from the Presbyterian College of New Jersey (later Princeton). Thereafter the young man oversaw his father's business interests in Virginia extending from Columbia, at the confluence of the Rivanna and James Rivers, to the southwestern edge of the state. His main responsibility was the Oxford Iron Works in Campbell County, which had been a crucial supplier to the Continental side during the War for Independence, and was said by Thomas Jefferson in *Notes on Virginia* to produce 1600 tons of iron a year. At home at Gum Creek by 1797, James Ross was a planter.

An inventory of 1801 suggests a degree of sophistication in the furnishings owned by the young family at gum Creek: mahogany tables, a corner chair, silver candlesticks, two tea tables, a tea chest, board, and cups. They possessed in addition window curtains and a crib, luxuries not listed in any other Fluvanna household inventory of the period, and a bookcase containing mainly classical works and law textbooks.

After James D. Ross's death in 1800 (in Bath County, of laudanum) his young widow and their daughter, Anna Maria, remained at Gum Creek for ten years. Then in May 1810, as related in the autobiography of Frederick Augustus Ross (David Ross's youngest child and Anna Maria's same-age uncle) Eliza Maria Ross took Anna Maria and Frederick Augustus, both thirteen, by coach from Columbia, Virginia, to Northampton County, Pennsylvania, and enrolled them both in Moravian boarding schools there. Frederick Augustus Ross (1796-1883) records that "father's money paid for both of us." In *The Autobiography of F. A. Ross, D.D.*, published privately in 1883, James Ross's much younger brother states, "I was born on Christmas Day." Elsewhere, in describing his childhood, he mentions that his "married brother James" lived across the river from their father's house, Cobham, of which the ruins still exist (in 2002), in present-day Cumberland County. In a third passage, F.A. Ross states that his niece and neighbor, Anna Maria Virginia Ross, was born within a month of his own birth date.

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Anna Maria Ross completed her formal education in Wilmington, Delaware, under her mother's supervision, and then returned to Virginia. In 1816 she married Dr. William B. Johnson of Orange County. In 1822, after living in Tennessee for a year, she petitioned for divorce. A decree of divorce granted in Tennessee was recorded in Fluvanna in July 1823. Anna Maria Ross Johnson then returned to live at Gum Creek. On July 15, 1825 she married a Columbia neighbor, George A.

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Payne. The Reverend Mr. Walker Timberlake, eminent Methodist and Fluvanna entrepreneur, conducted the service. Anna Maria and George A. Payne, who died in 1838 and 1839 respectively, were buried on a hill between Gum Creek and the town of Columbia. The spot was part of the original 1500-acre tract associated with Gum Creek.

In 1838 Frederick A. Ross acquired Gum Creek from the estate of his niece and childhood friend. Her mother, Eliza Maria Ross Barrett, by now twice widowed and living with relatives in Kentucky, deeded her life interest in Gum Creek to F. A. Ross in exchange for an annuity. In 1839 F. A. Ross sold Gum Creek to Joseph Bruce.

In 1850-51 a four-and-a half-mile "Rivanna Connection" canal was built across part of the Gum Creek plantation, with Bruce's assent. This linked the waterways of the Rivanna Navigation Company and the James River and Kanawha Canal. In 1863, through Joseph Bruce's bequest, the house and property – reduced then to 400 acres – passed to his nephew Reuben Bruce.

Gum Creek remained in the Bruce family until 1942 when Joseph Bruce the younger, an unmarried Confederate Army veteran, died at the age of ninety-nine. His sister, Eliza Bruce, with whom he had shared the house, had died a year earlier. Members of the Henry Johnson family, caretakers in Mr. Bruce's old age, were his intended heirs. However, in an eventual settlement, collateral kin of Joseph and Eliza Bruce were deeded the house and about thirty-three acres, while the Johnsons retained a slightly larger parcel of the land. A Johnson family member now in his seventies describes a "big old wooden barn" on their part of the Gum Creek property. This structure burned in the 1950s. Fieldstone foundations of the barn were scattered by a timbering operation in July 2002. After 1943, non-resident owners of Gum Creek kept rainwater out of the house, removed a derelict front porch, and stabilized the structure. The present owner, a painter, has lived here since 1973.

A letter written by David Ross in 1813 suggests the significance of the modest architectural style found at Gum Creek, or, more precisely, of the people that this architecture represents. Addressing a Scottish nephew traveling in America, Ross recommends that the young man visit their mutual

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relatives near Columbia. He mentions his late son's widow, the mistress of Gum Creek, whom affection promotes to blood kin: "my daughter Mrs. Eliza Maria Ross." He then expands on a classic Enlightenment theme.

It may be necessary to apprise you that those good people are not to be found in the luxury

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Gum Creek
Fluvanna County, VA

of palaces nor in the penury of cottages. They are in the middle walks of life, where the independence, good sense, and true patriotism of every country is generally to be met with. ...Real hapiness [sic], the offspring of a tranquil, contented mind, must be sought for...in the middle ranks of society, who combine good sense, an enlightened education, with independence of spirit and a moderate fortune...

Whatever the vicissitudes of those who have lived in the house, Gum Creek's simplicity, proportions, detail, and uncompromised condition attest in combination to some truth in the Enlightenment vision. In its best light, this small house of the Early Republic can be seen to embody an American idea of unassuming dignity.

Major Bibliographical References

Barrett, Eliza Maria Bancroft Ross Records, compiled by Thomas Turpin Bannister. Department of Biology, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY, 2001.

Bruce Family graves. Memorial Baptist Church cemetery, Columbia, VA.

Department of Historic Resources, Fluvanna County survey files, various dates. (esp. VDHR file #02-5001 for Mount Ida and WPAVHI reports on Cobham (Cumberland Co. site 154) and Red House (Buckingham Co. site 158)

Fluvanna County Deed Books, Land Tax Books, Marriage Book, #1, Will Books and loose papers.

Fluvanna County Historical Society. *Bulletin of the Fluvanna County Historical Society*, 1965 – 2000.

Miyagawa, Ellen. "In the Name of God, Amen." *Bulletin of the Fluvanna County Historical Society* **Section 9, 10** _____ **Page 7** _____

Bibliography, continued

Society, #67. Spring 1999.

Princeton University archives.

Ross, David, letter book. Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.

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Ross, Frederick Augustus. *The Autobiography of Rev. F. A. Ross, D.D. in Letters to a Lady of Knoxville, Tennessee*. Huntsville, Alabama, 1883.

Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association of the United States. *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*. Washington, D.C., 1903.

Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission. *Architectural History Identification and Assessment of Fluvanna County, VA*, 1993.

Verbal Boundary Description:

The Gum Creek property is identified as parcel #36-157, page 54 on the tax parcel maps for Fluvanna County, Virginia.

Boundary Justification:

The thirty-three acres included in the nomination for Gum Creek include the house and associated dependencies and the spring that historically have been part of the property.

Section Photo List Page 8

The following information is the same for all photographs:

Property name: Gum Creek
Location: Fluvanna County, Virginia

Photo 1 of 15
View: East elevation

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**Gum Creek
Fluvanna County, VA**

Photographer: Lindsay Nolting
Photo date: 2002
Negative number: 20311

Photo 2 of 15
View: South gable and south chimney
Photographer: Lindsay Nolting
Photo date: 2002
Negative number: 20311

Photo 3 of 15
View: West elevation showing 19th-century addition at left
Photographer: Lindsay Nolting
Photo date: 2002
Negative number: 20311

Photo 4 of 15
View: North gable with shed wing addition; smokehouse is at far right.
Photographer: Lindsay Nolting
Photo date: 2002
Negative number: 20312

Photo 5 of 15
View: View through center hall, facing east
Photographer: Lindsay Nolting
Photo date: 2001
Negative number: 20312

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Photo 6 of 15
View: Center hall, facing east
Photographer: Lindsay Nolting
Photo date: 2001
Negative number: 20312

Photo 7 of 15
View: South room facing north
Photographer: John McCarthy

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**Gum Creek
Fluvanna County, VA**

Photo date: 2000
Negative number: 20310

Photo 8 of 15
View: South fireplace, ground floor
Photographer: Lindsay Nolting
Photo date: 2002
Negative number: 20309

Photo 9 of 15
View: North fireplace, ground floor
Photographer: Lindsay Nolting
Photo date: 2002
Negative number: 20312

Photo 10 of 15
View: Stair, center hall
Photographer: Lindsay Nolting
Photo date: 2000
Negative number: 20312

Photo 11 of 15
View: Upstairs view from south bedroom
Photographer: John McCarthy
Photo date: 2000
Negative number: 20310

Section _Photo List_____ Page _10_____

Photo 12 of 15
View: Basement detail, northeast window
Photographer: John McCarthy
Photo date: 2000
Negative number: 20310

Photo 13 of 15
View: Buggy shed, east side
Photographer: John McCarthy
Photo date: 2000

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Fluvanna County, VA**

Negative number: 20309

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View: Smokehouse, south side

Photographer: John McCarthy

Photo date: 2000

Negative number: 20309

Photo 15 of 15

View: Spring enclosure

Photographer: Lindsay Nolting

Photo date: 2000

Negative number: 20310

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